

PACIFIC FRUIT EXPRESS COMPANY

October News Letter

San Francisco, October 16, 1953

ALL P.F.E. EMPLOYEES:

P.F.E. Loading

	1953			1952		
	<u>PFE Cars</u>	<u>Foreigns</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>PFE Cars</u>	<u>Foreigns</u>	<u>Total</u>
September	35,574	5,549	41,123	34,822	5,742	40,564
Jan.-Sept.	279,845	39,149	318,994	275,139	36,497	311,636

Car Situation:

The general car situation going into the October peak loading period is comfortable. Full protection of fan car requirements was provided through August and September and it appears that continued protection will be afforded through October to commodities for which fan cars are essential; such as, grapes, tree fruit, vacuum packed lettuce and frozen foods.

Crop Conditions - Southern Pacific Territory

Oregon: Medford Pear movement has passed its early peak but will continue in fair volume until harvest is completed and crop stored. Klamath potatoes are getting started and movement will increase gradually as maturity develops. Early indications are that the yield will be lighter.

Northern and Central California: The movement of fresh grapes is in full swing from the Fresno District, with peak volume expected through October 15th. Cantaloupes and Honeydews continue to move in light volume from Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys and will linger through the last week of October, weather permitting. Tomatoes are in heavy production in Stockton area and will continue moving in good volume through the month providing there are no severe frosts in the meantime.

In Salinas District lettuce is moving in fair volume to favorable markets and will continue through October.

Southern California: Is in its light loading period with citrus fruits and miscellaneous vegetables comprising the bulk of shipments.

T&NO: Heavy rains throughout Texas have insured a sufficient water supply for the coming vegetable season.

Along Union Pacific Railroad

Idaho-Utah District: In eastern Idaho the potato harvest is underway

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after a slow start. Although yields will compare favorably with last year, the quality is not up to par so that a smaller proportion will grade U.S. One. Markets have improved somewhat since the very low prices at the start of the deal. The exceptionally large onion crop is moving slowly due to consistently poor markets. Apples are now moving in fair volume.

Northwest District: Soft fruit harvests have been completed except for peaches from Yakima Branch. Apple shipments from Yakima Valley are underway and will continue through the winter months. Weather conditions throughout the district have been favorable and labor supply ample.

Eastern District: Colorado potatoes and vegetables are moving in normal volume. Western Nebraska potato situation is favorable and some good business is expected from this area.

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PFE's 25 new mechanically refrigerated cars are all in service and giving excellent temperatures. 200 additional large cars for handling frozen foods are to be built at Roseville. 100 of these will be equipped with the conventional ice bunkers in the car ends, and the balance, or 100, will be equipped with Frigidaire mechanical units. Experience with the present mechanical cars shows the desirability of using a large evaporator or cooling coil to reduce defrosting with its heavy input of heat. Consequently, these new cars will have re-designed and larger cooling coils than the first Frigidaires -- 728 square feet vs. 550. They will still be defrosted - controlled by a time clock. First trials will provide for defrosting every 24 hours, and as experience is gained with the units, the defrost interval will be lengthened, perhaps to the ultimate goal of 7 days for which the equipment was designed. There will be some other modifications - on the blowers in the envelope circuit, the use of flexible refrigeration lines, re-designed fuel tanks, and a water-sealed drip trap with its own heater to be operative during defrosting.

The 100 supers with end bunkers should come off production lines this fall to help relieve the tight supply of cars for frozen foods, and the 100 mechanical cars should be available early next year.

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In these days of electric kitchen refrigerators, deep freezers, and readily available ice from manufacturing plants, little thought is given to the problems of food protection and, if you please, ice for the drinks of earlier times. But there was a day when San Francisco, for example, simply had no ice. An enterprising individual, in 1850 did succeed in bringing the first boat-load of ice from Boston, around Cape Horn, and into the harbor of San

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Francisco. The following year one Ferdinand Vassault got out a mixed cargo of ice and salt from Boston, in the ship "Lucas". With 500 tons of ice and 1,100 barrels of apples on board, the "Lucas" sailed for San Francisco. By the time she reached her destination the ice had shrunk to 200 tons, but by selling it at \$12.50 a hundred pounds and the apples at \$35.00 a barrel, Vassault realized a profit of \$40,000 on the venture.

Encouraged by this success, other cargoes were dispatched to San Francisco but the results were mostly disappointing. And although the Sierras afforded an excellent and inexhaustible supply of ice, the cost of transporting it by wagon was prohibitive.

The early story of ice refrigeration in San Francisco has been told by Mr. Donald H. Clark, and was published in "Westward" Magazine issued by the Kaiser Steel Co. With their permission, this article is reproduced in the attachment hereto, which I am sure you will find interesting.

K. V. PLUMMER

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WHERE'S THE ICE?

By Donald H. Clark

San Francisco's crowded bars and restaurants demanded ice - and plenty of it - a century ago, and they had plenty of freshly mined gold from the Mother Lode country to buy it. But there wasn't any California ice available, and the few shiploads that came around the Horn from Massachusetts sold at a price which staggered even the Forty-Niners.

Then one hot day the captain of an Alaska fur-trading schooner slammed down his lukewarm drink in a waterfront saloon. "Why the devil don't you Californians ship ice from Alaska? Them Russians have got big ice houses full of it in Sitka?"

The bartender passed the skipper's remarks along to the saloon owner, with the eventual result that in 1851 a group of San Francisco business men made a deal for a cargo of ice with the Russian-American Company which traded throughout Alaska under an exclusive charter from the Russian Government. The American ship Bacchus was sent to Sitka to bring 250 tons at a cost of \$18,000 delivered to San Francisco, or about \$75 a ton.

The Alaska ice sold so successfully that nine San Franciscans organized the American Russian Commercial Company and signed a three-year contract with the Russians for delivery of ice to California ports at \$35 a ton. Several sailing ships were chartered for the ice trade, and three big ice houses were built near Sitka. The ice was harvested by native Kolosh Indians, who were paid one silver ruble per day (about 60 cents).

This ice from fresh-water ponds in southeastern Alaska proved to be so porous that almost half of each cargo melted before it reached the Golden Gate. But up at Kodiak in the Aleutian Islands, the sub-zero winter temperature froze inland lakes into good solid ice 18 inches thick. The Russian-American company abandoned their Sitka operation and transferred the equipment to Woody Island in Three Saints Bay near Kodiak. A small natural lake was increased to 10 acres by building a dam, and warehouses were built to hold 40,000 tons of ice.

Ice harvesting, storage, and ship loading was done by Aleut labor, the natives being paid the equivalent of 20 cents a day, plus their food and a liberal shot of rum once a day. When the church bell rang at high noon, a line of one hundred fifty to two hundred ice-harvesting Aleutian Islanders formed in front of headquarters. The rum was served in five-gallon iron kettles with a drinking saucer attached to a chain. Each native stepped up when his name was called, removed his cap, made a low bow, and dipped up a brimming saucer of rum. After downing the drink at a gulp, he bowed again, replaced his

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cap, and went happily back to work.

The company kept 20 to 30 horses on Woody Island, the first work animals to be imported into Alaska. A small water-powered saw-mill was built at the dam to furnish sawdust for packing ice. Lumber production was entirely incidental.

The ice trade flourished until 1859, when trouble developed at the San Francisco end. The president of the American Russian Commercial company made off with the company's ready cash; its banking house failed; and facilities for storing ice were so inadequate that meltage loss was staggering. After four years of unadulterated grief, the company reorganized and signed a new contract with the Russians.

The contract price was \$7 a ton loaded aboard ship at Kodiak. The Russians agreed, in case they shipped ice by their own vessels, to charge any other buyers \$25 a ton delivered to California, Oregon or Mexican ports. Under this monopoly, ice retailed in San Francisco at \$100 a ton.

In 1871 when San Franciscans were wailing loudly about the five cent-per-pound retail price of Alaska ice, artificial ice made its appearance. The American Russian Commercial company dropped its price to two cents.

By newspaper advertisement the company warned the public against the impurity of artificial ice, and urged the purchase of Kodiak ice "Which is made by nature from pure spring water." The flourishing days of the Alaska ice trade were numbered, however, as in addition to competing with manufactured ice, the A.R.C. company had to meet the price of natural ice brought to California markets from the Sierras over the newly-built railroads. By 1881, after 30 years of operation, ice harvesting in Alaska had become a memory.

An almost forgotten episode connected with the Alaska ice trade discloses a sad chapter in the life of Ulysses S. Grant when he was a first lieutenant stationed at Vancouver Barracks on the Columbia River in the winter of 1852-1853. With Captain Rufus Ingalls and Lieutenant Henry Wallen, Grant chartered a brig from Captain Dall of the Pacific Mail Steamship company to haul a load of ice to San Francisco. The officers cut the ice from creeks and sloughs with their own labor, and loaded one hundred tons in the brig's hold.

Unfortunately the sailing vessel encountered a near-tropical calm a few days out of San Francisco, and logged only 150 miles in five weeks. Most of the ice melted, and when the remainder of the cargo reached San Francisco the market was completely glutted. Two large shiploads of ice had arrived from Alaska on the previous day.

Another obscure bit of history records the startling fact

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that the San Francisco ice company came very close to acquiring title to the entire territory of Alaska. During the Crimean War (1854-1856), Russia feared Great Britain would seize Alaska. To avert this loss, the Russian Government sent their minister at Washington, D.C., a fictitious bill of sale conveying the ownership of Alaska to the American Russian Commercial company of San Francisco. Spaces for dates and certain details were left blank, to be filled in before the document was made public. When the Russian minister consulted the United States Secretary of State and Senator William M. Gwin of California, he was advised the document should not be publicized; Great Britain would certainly not fall for so obvious a hoax.

When Secretary of State Seward induced the United States to buy Alaska from Russia in 1867, the price paid was \$7,200,000. Seven million was the original figure, but at the last minute the Russian minister, Baron de Stoeckl, remembered that the Russian American company had a big investment in the Alaska ice business and added \$200,000 to pay them off.

The last fantastic chapter in the Alaska ice trade was written in February, 1898, when "The Klondike Ice Towing Company" offered stock for sale through an advertisement in The Mining & Industrial Reporter of Denver, Colorado. The icebergs were to be "towed south, sold to southern cities."

"For various reasons" stated the advertisement, "it is thought best not to give too many particulars to the public at the present time. To stockholders, however, full particulars will be given." Evidently investors gave the icebergs a cold shoulder, as no record exists of south-bound icebergs in 1898 or later years.

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